

Indigenous Peoples have lived on this land since time immemorial.

Native American Nations govern, respect, manage, and maintain ancestral lands.

Evidence for **Viking presence** in North America.

European countries, including England, Spain, and France, explore the Caribbean, Central and North America in search of trade routes. Operating under the Doctrine of Discovery, European countries legitimized colonization, invalidated Indigenous land ownership, and enslaved Indigenous peoples.

Establishment of 13 British Colonies along the East Coast of the North American continent. The Dutch, French, Swedish, Scottish, and Spanish also founded settlements during this time. Despite already being occupied by many Indigenous peoples, explorers and settlers take credit for discovering the land and claim it as their own. This starts a narrative that the land and waters belong to the European settlers rather than Indigenous peoples.

African enslavement begins with 20 Angolans who arrived in Virginia. The labor of enslaved peoples enables the settlement and development of land across many of the original British colonies. Slavery and its debate shapes and influences many early U.S. land decisions including the Louisiana Purchase and the Annexation of Texas. Slavery also shapes African Americans' relationship to the land. Many enslaved Africans spent their days planting, harvesting, and doing hard labor in fields often under brutal conditions including physical and psychological threats. Engagement with land was linked to a social hierarchy and reflected deeply entrenched racial power dynamics. Violence and subjugation of African Americans and white supremacy were early hallmarks of African Americans' relationships with land and open spaces. Ultimately over 400,000 Africans are enslaved and brought to North America.

Time Immemorial

~1000 AD

Late 1400's and 1500's

1607-1732

1619

Britain set the **Proclamation Line** to temporarily define the limits of colonial land in North America. Lands east of the Appalachian Mountains were declared colonial lands and the land west of the divide as an Indian Reserve. The Proclamation canceled all colonial land claims within the Indian Reserve and prohibited colonists from purchasing land in the Indian Reserve. Through subsequent treaties in 1768 and 1770 with Indigenous peoples, present day Kentucky and West Virginia were declared colonial lands.

The **Treaty of Paris**, marking the end of the American Revolutionary War (1775-83), acknowledges the sovereignty of the United States and defines the original borders of the United States as all of the land east of the Mississippi River, north of Florida and south of Canada (almost the exact border we have today).

The U.S. Constitution establishes the **government's authority over "property belonging to the United States"** and specifically the right to retain, dispose of, and manage lands. At the time of the Constitution's adoption, lands that were not under private or state ownership and were not claimed by a foreign power were considered part of the public domain.

Purchase of the Louisiana territory from France causes President Jefferson to launch the **Lewis and Clark Expedition**, by which the U.S. seeks to explore and map the new territory, find a navigable route across the western half of the continent, establish a territorial claim to today's Pacific Northwest region, assess the resources in the new territory, and establish relationships with Indigenous tribes throughout the region. Jefferson places special importance on declaring U.S. dominion over the lands occupied by the tribes. The expedition could not have been successfully undertaken without the support of Indigenous tribes and tribal members like Sacagawea and many others who guided Lewis and Clark.

U.S. General Land Office (GLO) is formed to survey and sell government-owned land. During its existence, the GLO administers two important land ownership/disposal laws; the Homestead Act and the Preemption Act.

1763

1783

1789

1804-1806

1812

Signed by President Andrew Jackson, the **Indian Removal Act** calls for the removal of Indigenous people, including the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee/Creek, Seminole, and **GWY**(tsa-la-gi)/Cherokee people, from their ancestral lands mostly in Southern states in exchange for lands in what would become parts of Oklahoma.

As part of the implementation of the Indian Removal Act, Indigenous people are forced to give up their lands east of the Mississippi River, in what is now Georgia and Tennessee, to move to lands in what would become Northern Oklahoma. Indigenous people later call this journey the **Trail of Tears** where they face internment, hunger, disease, and exhaustion. Out of 15,000 Indigenous people forced into the march, over 4,000 died.

The **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**, which ends the Mexican-American war, establishes the southern boundary of the United States as the Rio Grande River. Through the treaty, Mexico cedes parts of what is now Texas, all of California, and a large area comprising roughly half of New Mexico, most of Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Wyoming and Colorado. The treaty included a provision that the United States would respect land and water titles and allow the new citizens to remain on their land. However the U.S. ultimately does little to uphold those claims.

The **Indian Appropriations Act** displaces Indigenous populations across the United States. Fifty-six million acres of sovereign tribal lands (mostly west of the Mississippi) are established to permanently relocate Indigenous populations from across the country. Additional appropriations acts were passed between 1871 and 1889 and addressed the status of Indigenous nations as ‘wards of the government’, the ability to sell land, and the settlement of “unassigned lands” by European settlers and their descendants.

New York City’s **Central Park** is designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as an early example of urban conservation.

1830

1838

1848

1851

1857

The **Pacific Railway Act** provides government support for building the first transcontinental railroad. Some of the land acquired to build the railway is seized from Indigenous peoples. Railroads are built predominantly by East Asian laborers through the use of exploitative labor practices. The railroad, which was essential to getting people from the East to see public lands in the West, contributed to the decimation of the buffalo population, a vital food source for Native American people of the Plains region.

The **Homestead Act** provides homesteaders with 160 acres of land. A portion of the land made available under the Homestead Act was initially dispossessed from Indigenous people.

Under the **Yosemite Grant Act**, President Lincoln grants Yosemite Valley to California as a public park. The park could not have been designated without the forced dispossession in 1851 of Yosemite Valley from the Ahwahneechee/Miwok people. Some of the first park patrollers were the Buffalo Soldiers, an all African American army regiment.

General Sherman issues **Special Field Order #15**, setting aside land in coastal South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida to grant “a plot of not more than (40) acres of tillable land” to every family of formerly enslaved people. Months later, President Andrew Johnson overturned the order and returned the land to its former Confederate owners.

President Andrew Johnson signs the **Alaska Purchase** and acquires approximately 370 million acres for \$7.2 million. Native Alaskans were subjected to the same assimilation practices as Indigenous people in the continental U.S. Today, 220 million acres are federally protected parks and refuges in Alaska.

1862

1862

1864

1865

1867

The **Indian Appropriations Act** ended the practice of interacting with or recognizing tribes through treaties. Ostensibly, those treaties that were in effect at the time of the Appropriations Act remained in force. However, many of the promises made in those treaties were subsequently broken by the United States Government when it served the government's interests.

Yellowstone is designated by Congress as the **first National Park**.

Enacted in cities and states across the south after the Civil War, the first **Jim Crow Laws** legalize racial segregation and discrimination. Although slavery is abolished in 1865, African Americans continue to experience severe discrimination. Parks at the time are segregated with separate campgrounds and picnic areas for white people and People of Color. Public lands are not equally available and accessible to all when people enter the park. People of color are also terrorized by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan which carried out acts of violence, such as lynching, in wooded areas.

The **Chinese Exclusion Act** is passed to temporarily limit the immigration of Chinese people to the U.S. This law is the first of its kind to restrict immigration and target a specific national group. The Act was made permanent and more restrictive in 1902 and it wasn't until 1943, when China became a member of the Allied Nations in WW2 that the Act was repealed. Chinese and other East Asian laborers were instrumental in the construction of the transcontinental railroad, the mechanism of the 'See America First' campaign which encouraged people to travel west to experience the beauty of public lands.

Lands in the Adirondacks are reorganized into a **Forest Preserve**. New laws are passed restricting fishing, hunting, and making fires and law enforcement begins patrolling the Preserve. People not on the official map of the Adirondacks are deemed squatters and evicted. Wealthy residents put up fences and signs to keep poor people out of their lands. The state passes lumber trespassing laws criminalizing the cutting of trees except by lumber companies. It also passes arson laws prohibiting fires, and erects fire observation stations to enforce these prohibitions.

1871

1872

1877

1882

1885-1910

The **Dawes Act** is passed, calling for most designated tribal land to be divided up into individual allotments and those who accepted the parcels and agreed to live separately from the tribe were granted citizenship, effectively dismantling tribal governments and communally held land. Any excess land was confiscated by the federal government and sold on the open market. The Dawes Act dramatically reduced the amount of land owned by Native Americans over the next few years.

The federal **Forest Reserve Act** authorizes the president to create forest reserves, which later become National Forests under the purview of the Forest Service.

The **Reclamation Act** formalizes the ability of private corporations and agriculture to draw water from federal public lands. The Reclamation Act often supersedes Mexican-Americans claims to water rights that were initially protected in the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo.

Pelican Island is declared the first **National Wildlife Refuge**.

The **U.S. Forest Service** is established.

1887

1891

1902

1903

1905

The **Antiquities Act** gives the president the authority to establish National Monuments that have objects of historic or scientific importance. Bear's Den, also known as Devil's Tower, in Wyoming is established as the first National Monument. This was and is still a culturally significant area to many Indigenous tribes in the area.

The **Weeks Act** allows the federal government to purchase private land in service of protecting watersheds and streams, as well as setting aside land for forest reserves.

The **National Park Service** is established through the National Park Service Organic Act.

The **19th Amendment** grants women the right to vote. Prior to this date women of all races were unable to vote. This limited their ability to formally participate in public lands management decisions. The 19th Amendment opened up participation opportunities for white women. However, African American and Indigenous women are not guaranteed the right to vote until later.

The **See America First** tourism campaign gains traction when the National Park Service begins portraying national parks as national assets during the 1920s and encourages cross country train travel to visit these places. The campaign, launched earlier by railroads such as the Northern Pacific, Santa Fe, and Great Northern, is an attempt to increase rail ridership by promoting places like Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Canyon National Parks as tourist destinations.

1906

1911

1916

1920

1920s

The **Equal Rights Amendment** is introduced to prohibit discrimination based on sex. It eventually passes Congress in 1972, but fails to receive enough state ratifications to become law. Even though women could now vote, they continue to experience discrimination based on sex.

New Mexico's **Gila Wilderness** is established as the **first Primitive Area**.

The **Indian Citizenship Act** grants Indigenous people citizenship. It is met with a mixed reaction from Indigenous people, as some wish to remain as sovereign nations and citizens. The Act creates fear that Indigenous people will lose even further sovereignty over their ancestral lands after 300 years of dispossession.

The **Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)** is created as a New Deal jobs program that offers young, unmarried men jobs on public lands. A similar series of "She-She-She" camps employ a small number of women on public lands for a short time. African Americans and Indigenous people were able to serve, mostly in segregated camps.

The **National Housing Act** creates the Federal Housing Administration, which permits redlining in housing deeds and covenants to prohibit People of Color and Jewish people from receiving loans, owning, or living in houses in certain neighborhoods. This impacts some people's basic rights to own land and property.

1923

1924

1924

1933

1934

The **Indian Reorganization Act** encourages Indigenous nation sovereignty, restores some of the lands that had been lost due to the Dawes Act of 1887 and its subsequent amendments, and promotes entrepreneurship, education, and employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples.

Establishment of **The Wilderness Society**.

Shenandoah National Park is created, and 500 families are displaced in the process. This is one of many public lands areas along the Appalachian Mountains that is created through the displacement of poor white families. To the extent families are not physically removed, they are forced out due to criminalization of subsistence hunting and fishing practices.

Japanese Internment Camps are established during World War II. America's Japanese citizens (some multigenerational) are interned in camps throughout the U.S. Most of these camps were on land that today is part of the federal public lands system.

The **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** is established and takes over the responsibilities of the former General Land Office.

1934

1935

1935

1942

1946

The **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)** is established.

Congress passes the **Indian Relocation Act**, which provided for relocation expenses and vocational training to encourage Indigenous peoples to leave reservations, settle in select urban areas, and become more “self-sufficient.” This Act is part of a series of laws promoting “Indian termination” from the mid-1940s to mid-1960s - the federal government terminated recognition of over 100 tribes, removed 2.5 million acres of trust land from reservations, and granted states jurisdiction over tribes and reservations.

Illinois becomes the first state to **decriminalize homosexuality** by repealing sodomy laws. Several states follow in the years to come, starting to legalize and destigmatize homosexuality.

Rachel Carson’s 1962 book **Silent Spring** exposed the threat of environmental degradation caused by the chemicals used in pesticides and manufacturing and raised awareness of ecological issues in the U.S. Immigrant farm workers laid the groundwork in the fight for the regulation of pesticides and continue to advance the cause.

The **Wilderness Act** establishes Wilderness, the highest form of federal land preservation.

1949

1956

1962

1962

1964

The **Civil Rights Act** is passed, opening the door for people of all identities, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, to access public accommodations throughout the U.S.

The **Land and Water Conservation Fund**, a critical conservation and recreation program, is created from the royalties of off-shore oil and gas drilling.

The **Voting Rights Act** provides legal protection against racial discrimination in exercising the right to vote. This act marks the point in time that all Americans are fully eligible to participate in public lands management decision-making.

The **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act** is passed to protect rivers and river corridors.

The **National Trails System Act** establishes the National Trails System, which establishes the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail.

1964

1964

1965

1968

1968

The **Indian Civil Rights Act** grants Indigenous people most of the Bill of Rights, including the right to free speech, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, and protection against cruel and unusual punishment. It is worth noting that this act came after the Civil Rights Act, and that up to this date discrimination against Indigenous people was both condoned and legal.

Police raid the **Stonewall Inn** in New York City, an establishment created as a safe space for gay and lesbian people, inciting the Stonewall Riots that protest violence against LGBTQ people. Within two years of this event, LGBTQ rights groups sprouted up in every major U.S. city.

Congress passes the **The National Environmental Policy Act** requiring environmental review of the impact of proposed federal agency actions.

Following the discovery of oil in the Arctic, some Alaska Natives protested, arguing their land ownership rights were not recognized. In compensation, the **Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA)** authorized Alaska Natives to select and receive title to 44 million acres of land, and \$962,000,000 in cash as settlement of their aboriginal claim to lands within the state.

The **Endangered Species Act** passes to protect fish and wildlife.

1968

1969

1970

1971

1973

The **American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIFRA)** grants all “American Indian, Eskimo, Aleu, and Native Hawaiians” religious freedom under the United States Constitution and protects their right to conduct religious practices and ceremonies, some of which take place on public lands. For centuries prior to this act, many Indigenous religious practices were prohibited by law.

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) protects 104 million acres of Alaska’s highest value conservation lands as national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, national monuments, and conservation areas. The law helped to safeguard wildlife habitat and wilderness areas, as well as traditional and culturally important subsistence resources and practices.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act** prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life including employment, transportation, public accommodations, and access to state and local government services.

The **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)** establishes the right of “Indian Tribes and their lineal descendants” to recover possession of human remains, sacred objects, and other important objects that were taken illegally or unethically. The act requires certain institutions to identify and repatriate such items to their original communities.

During the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, the participants draft the **17 principles of Environmental Justice** to guide the fight against environmental discrimination.

1978

1980

1990

1990

1991

First enacted in 1966 to protect historic properties and archeological sites from destruction, the original **National Historic Preservation Act** did not mention Indigenous people or their culturally important sites. In 1992 the act was amended to include Native American cultural and religious sites on the National Historic Register. Among other things, the act requires federal agencies to evaluate the impact of all federally funded or permitted projects on historic properties (buildings, archaeological sites, etc.) through a process known as Section 106 Review.

The **Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)** passes, barring the federal government from legally recognizing the validity of same-sex marriages.

The **Omnibus Public Land Management Act** adds millions of acreage to existing federal protection schemes, expands the types of designations, and expands the role of agencies in protecting federal public lands.

The **Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act** is signed, which extends the definition of a hate crime to include hate crimes based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and ability.

Honouliuli, the site of a former Japanese internment camp, is designated a National Monument.

1992

1996

2009

2010

2015

Stonewall becomes the first National Monument site dedicated to LGBTQ history, one year after the Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage.

President Obama designates **Bears Ears National Monument** in southeastern Utah. The monument, designated at the request of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, includes numerous sites that are sacred to Hopi, Diné/Navajo, Nuchu/Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and A:shiwi/Zuni tribal members.

Three national monuments, **Reconstruction Era, Birmingham Civil Rights, and Freedom Riders**, are designated to honor the civil rights movement.

Medgar and Myrlie Evers National Monument (Mississippi) is created to honor the civil rights movement and Medgar Evers's assassination in 1963.

2016

2016

2017

2019



Foundational Concepts of North American Colonization

Colonialism is the process by which one country controls the political activities and economic resources of another through (1) forced entry into their territory; (2) alteration and destruction of Indigenous cultures and patterns of social organizations; (3) domination of Indigenous people; and (4) development of elaborate justifications for these actions. The colonizers' actions all work to benefit the home country.

Settler colonialism is a type of colonialism where the colonists stay on the land they colonize and never intend to leave. In the U.S., settler colonialism takes the form of stimulating economic growth through development and natural resource extraction, and implementing political structures that disadvantage People of Color, Indigenous people, women, non-Christians, and other communities who face oppression.

“The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism — the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft.”

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States, 2014

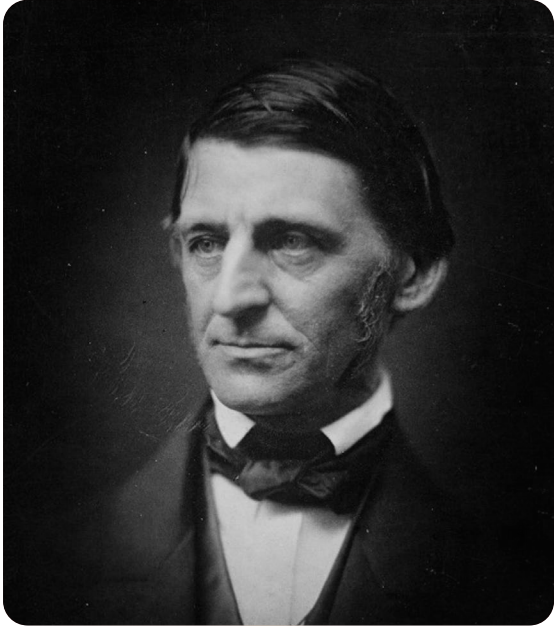


Foundational Concepts of North American Colonization

Manifest Destiny was the belief that American settlers had a divine destiny to settle the West, and spread new American thought, culture, and institutions. Manifest Destiny was rooted in the idea that white European settlers were racially and culturally superior to other peoples, especially the Indigenous people they encountered and killed along the way. Early European settlers of North America saw land as theirs for the taking. They claimed land without consideration for Indigenous peoples who inhabited these lands, or the potential need to set land aside for conservation or public use.

“This is our high destiny, and in nature’s eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man — the immutable truth and beneficence of God.”

John L. O’Sullivan
The Great Nation of Futurity, 1839



Early Land-Based Values

Transcendentalism — wilderness as a place where one could commune with God through appreciating beauty. Though wilderness was still a potentially dangerous place, facing its challenges was a noble endeavor. By fully immersing in nature, people and society can improve and by understanding nature, we can understand truth.

“Nature is the place where God can be found. Nature is thus sacred; it is a source of nourishment, of beauty and inspiration. It is in Nature, therefore, and in Nature alone, that man can find what he needs: it is where God speaks to him; it is where man can regenerate himself, without the help of traditional, institutional religion—since his only religion, indeed, is Nature.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Nature, 1836

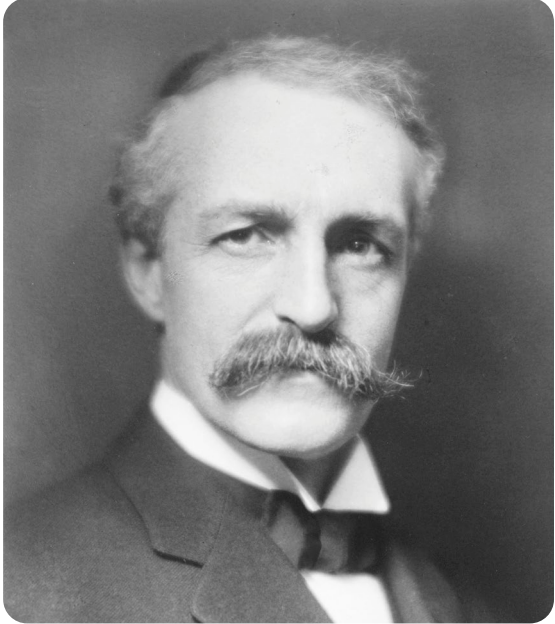


Early Land-Based Values

Preservation — wild places should be protected from any human impact. A person could be closer to God, improve themselves, and find a true home in wilderness. All beings have worth, regardless of their value for human use.

“As in Yosemite, the sublime rocks of its walls seem to glow with life, whether leaning back in repose or standing erect in thoughtful attitudes, giving welcome to storms and calms alike, their brows in the sky, their feet set in the groves and gay flowery meadows, while birds, bees, and butterflies help the river and waterfalls to stir all the air into music... Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike...”

John Muir
The Yosemite, 1912



Early Land-Based Values

Conservation — wilderness has resources that humans were entitled to extract and use. Conservation advocates for extracting resources responsibly so that they will be available for future generations.

“The central thing for which Conservation stands is to make this country the best possible place to live in, both for us and for our descendants. It stands against the waste of the natural resources which cannot be renewed, such as coal and iron; it stands for the perpetuation of the resources which can be renewed, like the food-producing soils and the forests; and, most of all, it stands for equal opportunity for every American citizen to get his fair share of benefit from these resources, both now and hereafter...It recognizes fully the right of the present generation to use what it needs and all it needs of the natural resources now available, but it recognizes equally our obligation so to use what we need that our descendants shall not be deprived of what they need...”

Gifford Pinchot,
The ABC of Conservation, 1909



Early Land-Based Values

Rugged Individualism — connection to nature fosters and encourages toughness and reliance on the self to combat the ease of city life and the dangers of “eroding masculinity” presented by industrialization.

“A life of ignoble ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual... If you are rich and are worth your salt, you will teach your sons that though they may have leisure, it is not to be spent in idleness; for wisely used leisure merely means that those who possess it, being free from the necessity of working for their livelihood, are all the more bound to carry on some kind of non-remunerative work in science, in letters, in art, in exploration, in historical research-work of the type we most need in this country...”

President Theodore Roosevelt
Strenuous Life, 1899